

Jason Rigby: One: Detroit-Cleveland Trio



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September 7, 2016

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Jason Rigby's first two releases as a leader, *Translucent Space* (2006) and *Sage* (2009), were widely acclaimed both for Rigby's sophisticated compositions and for his voice as an emerging saxophone talent. On these albums, the first with a nonet and the second with a quintet, Rigby evoked the sound of mid-to-late 60s Miles and early fusion, with arrangements that were disciplined and complex but which hinted at openness to the avant-garde.

On *One: Detroit-Cleveland Trio*, Rigby's third release with

Fresh Sound New Talent, he's gone in a very different direction. For one thing, while he's sticking with bassist [Cameron Brown](#) and drummer [Gerald Cleaver](#) (two-thirds of his rhythm section on Sage), he's using a trio format here. This puts the emphasis solely on Rigby's skill as an improviser rather than on his compositional approach. Moreover, while Rigby's earlier releases focused exclusively on his own material, on this record he tackles some standards: Rodgers and Hart's "You Are Too Beautiful" and George and Ira Gershwin's "Embraceable You," in addition to Herbie Hancock's "Speak Like a Child." While it's interesting to hear this side of Rigby's musical perspective, it does admittedly weaken the cohesiveness of the album as a whole, as the traditional pieces differ significantly from Rigby's more exploratory impulses.

Rigby is a capable soloist on the standards, to be sure. His soprano work on "Speak Like a Child" is especially effective, with plenty of cascading notes throughout his infectious solo over the simmering bossa nova rhythm provided by Brown and Cleaver. But in this stripped-down group format, Rigby is most impressive when he gets the chance to really turn it loose. Take the album's opener, "Dive Bar," for instance: in a fiery duo with Cleaver, Rigby's sharp-edged tone and flurries of clipped phrases really stand out, and the close rapport he establishes with Cleaver is unmistakable. Similarly, on the other Rigby originals, like "Live by the Sword," or "Dewey," the album's closer, Rigby gives himself the freedom to go a bit further "out" with his solos, and the results are terrific. In addition to a large dose of Wayne Shorter or Joe Henderson, there's also always been that bit of

Ornette or late-period Coltrane in Rigby's playing, and here's where he gives that aspect the chance to emerge more fully. These tracks are arguably better for his colleagues as well, as Brown and Cleaver seem truly in their element when freed from the more confining parameters of the standards.

Rigby's facebook page suggests that this is the first of a series of recordings planned for this group. Let's hope so, particularly if they continue to take the music in less conventional directions.

Track Listing: Dive Bar; Dorian Gray; You Are Too Beautiful; Newtoon; Speak Like a Child; Live by the Sword; Embraceable You; Dewey.

Personnel: Jason Rigby: tenor and soprano saxophone; Cameron Brown: bass; Gerald Cleaver: drums.

Year Released: 2016 | Record Label: [Fresh Sound New Talent](#)
| Style: [Modern Jazz](#)